

HAS JESUS CHRIST LIVED ON EARTH?

An Essay seeking to show that Jesus Christ was not the second divine Person once incarnated, nor a man on earth who became deified, but an aspect of God, His Ideal Love, experienced, personified and dramatised by the early Church

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SYNOPSIS

	PAGE
(1) <u>The Logia or Teachings of "Jesus" in the early Church-group was a compilation by Christians, selected (by the "Christ," i.e. the new Love-Spirit in their hearts) from the Old Testament, the Book of Enoch, and Rabbinical sayings and parables</u>	<u>6</u>
(2) <u>The ideas of Paul concerning the story of Christ come from the Mystery-Religions and Gnosticism, and tell of the Love-Spirit personified, as if this "Christ" had once lived on earth</u>	<u>14</u>
(3) <u>The Gospel of Mark (embedded also in Matthew and Luke) is a fuller description of Christ's life on earth, the stories being composed from "Messianic" passages in the Old Testament, and from discussions in the Church and between the Church and the Jews</u>	<u>30</u>
(4) <u>In Matthew i. and ii., Luke i. and ii, we get more art, not history, compositions of what the birth of the "Christ" "must have been"; but the stories are woven from those of Samuel and Mithras, and from the Old Testament "Messianic" passages</u>	<u>43</u>

	PAGE
(5) The Fourth Gospel is full of symbolical stories and doctrinal speeches (in the style of the author, who also wrote 1 John), while the crucifixion-story again shows the influence of the Old Testament	48

The conclusion is that Jesus Christ was never a man on earth, but was another term for the "Wisdom" or "Logos" of God, and was the personification of the Ideal of Illimitable Love (the "die-to-live" principle), which is the Law of God and the deepest law of every human life	54
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Has Jesus Christ Lived on Earth?

It is becoming increasingly difficult to believe that a man Jesus ever lived. More and more of the stories in the Gospels are found to be allegorical or simply composed to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ. The orthodox position was that all in the Gospels was true historically. Then doubt was thrown on the Virgin birth, the transfiguration, the walking on the sea, and the physical resurrection of Jesus. But the process has gone on. Liberal Christianity has passed into Radical Christianity, if we may use the phrase. The figure of a man Jesus becomes less and less apparent.

Refuge is taken by many in the writings of the Apostle Paul, but, as I hope to show briefly, his picture of Jesus was dictated by the Mystery-Religions of his day. Last, it is said that there must

have been a great personality to start Christianity, but other religions have come without one great personality, and we can discern several spiritually-minded souls in whom Christianity started, if it ever can be said to have had a start—viz., Peter, John, Paul.

It is the purpose of this short essay to set out, in a summary manner, the considerations that lead to the view that Jesus Christ was never a man, but was the Divine Ideal (in men) experienced, personified, projected, and dramatised by the early Church.

In order to do this let us pass in review the five different strata, or layers, of New Testament literature which are of special value on this subject.

(1) **First may be taken the “Logia,”** or collection of sayings ascribed to Jesus. We find in the Gospel of Matthew a great part is taken up with using the Gospel of Mark—most of Mark is in Matthew. But there are large sections of Matthew over and above those which

contain Mark. There are the first two chapters, with which we will deal later. Then there are many discourses, such as those in Matt. v., vi., vii., x., xviii., xxv. These six chapters are also (in parts) in Luke.

(a) We can trace the origin of some of the "Logia" as given in Matthew and Luke.

"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth" comes from Psalm xxxvii. 11.

The idea of inwardness in Matt. v. is given in Jer. xxxi. 31—34 ("I will put my law in the hearts").

Hosea vi. 6 is quoted twice in Matthew: "I desire mercy and not sacrifice," so that Christian ethics were the best in the Old Testament, selected therefrom by men in whom an ideal spirit (or Christ—for "the Lord is the Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 17) had been evolved in history.

The great commands to love God and one's neighbour come from Deut vi. 4 and Lev. xix. 18, and the idea of "forgiving and so being forgiven by God"

is in "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs." Exhortations to almsgiving are in the Book of Tobit, while in Proverbs we read we are to feed our enemies (quoted in Romans xii.). Thus even the command to love one's enemies is not an original idea in Christianity. It is, of course, also in Buddhism (B.C. 500).

The parables of the Kingdom are such as were told by the Rabbis (see Ederheim: "Life and Times of Jesus Messiah" — for parallels). The Book of Enoch tells of the Christ sitting upon the throne of his judgment (Matt. xxv. 31).

No *man* could have spoken all the words of the "Logia," such as "Inasmuch as ye did it unto the least of these my brethren ye did it unto me" (Matt. xxv. 40), "Whoso receiveth you receiveth me" (Matt. x. 40). The speaker is a spirit who can and does live in many hearts.

The "Come unto me" passage of Matt. xi. 28—30 is theology, not history. It is

taken from Ecclesiasticus li. 23—27 (“Draw near, put your head under the yoke,” etc.). The Church doctrine is really implied in the sayings “On this rock I will build my Church,” “Tell it to the Church” (Matt. xvi. 18; xviii. 17).

Dives (in the Lucan parable) represents Judaism careless of the Gentile world (Lazarus), while Zacchæus (Luke xix.) is an allegorical figure to represent the “publicani” (tax collectors), from which class some Christians came.

The parable of the Prodigal Son has its roots in Philo of Alexandria (about B.C. 20—A.D. 30), who wrote of prodigal sons and how their fathers love them and give them special attention. The “Lord’s Prayer” is a compilation of some Jewish prayers used by the Jews, and selected here to give the idea of *brevity* in prayer (see Matt. vi. 7—13).

Thus we can find no original divine Teacher in the collection of “Logia.” It is a production of the Church, and tells of discussions in the Church as to the coming of the Messiah, forgiveness

(Matt. xviii. 21—22), prayer, and other subjects; the voice of the Church being set down as the voice of "Christ" (the Love-Ideal in the Church, though, of course, imperfectly apprehended therein).

(b) Whence came this idea of Christ? The Book of Enoch is a collection of tracts on the Messiah, and in the part called "The Similitudes," written about 70 B.C., we are told that the Christ was with God when he made the world, and he is the elect of God, the Son of Man, and will come to judge all men. Thus in times before our era Christ was thought of as *already* existing, as an ideal life in heaven, with God, soon to come as Judge and "sit upon the throne" (cf. Matt. xxv.).

It is not necessary to go behind the Book of Enoch, except to say that before that time the Messiah was only thought of as an Ideal King, a man, who should free Israel from her enemies and bring in the reign of righteousness (cf. Is. xi. 1—10; ix. 1—6; Micah v. 1—3). The title Messiah does not occur till later than

Isaiah, but the idea can be traced back to Isaiah.

In the Book of Enoch we get the conception that the Messiah was a super-human, divine being, already existing. He was imagined to be a person.

This was the starting-point for the Church, which consisted of pious Jews in Antioch (in Syria) and Jerusalem about the beginning of our era, men who met to discuss the Messiah, and who believed in him and looked for his coming.

But when they composed the "Logia" they had not thought of the Messiah as having *been* born, as having died and risen. They only thought of him as a heavenly teacher soon to come as judge. Really there had come, naturally, in history, a spiritual uplift in these men; and this self-revelation of God as the Love-Ideal (ending the Law) was called "Christ." The fullness of time had come, for three movements were then focused together—Stoicism, Messianism, and the Mystery-Religions.

Stoicism in Posidonius (teacher in Athens in the first century B.C.) was an eclectic faith. It taught an indwelling, all-penetrating God, and the power of man to reach to immortal life. Messianism in the Books of "Daniel" and "Enoch" had given Jews to believe a Messiah lived in heaven and would come as judge. The Mystery-Religions taught a World-Saviour (variously named) who had been in heaven, had come to earth, suffered death, descended to hell, and risen or ascended.

The clashing of these three upon one another gave rise to a new religion, Christianity, which came naturally in history; for the divine is seen in the way natural events work out. The earliest Christian Church had not this new religion in fullness. That only came by Paul.

The earliest Church held to a Christ who was present where two or three met in his name. This Christ was really the Indwelling Love-Ideal, beaten out by the thoughts in Stoicism, Messianism, and

the Mystery-Religions. The last taught that the soul must die to live. Messianism is a term indicating the religious hopes of Jews in the two centuries B.C., and it is associated with the ideal of life given in such a book as "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" (written in times B.C.).

The earliest Christians, then, had no idea of the Messiah having been born and having died and risen. Their thoughts were only a continuation of the Book of Enoch. They said, in effect, "We feel a Love-Ideal: it ends and fulfils for us the ceremonial and moral laws of the Jews: it is all we need: it is the Messiah speaking to us, God's representative in our midst: it binds us together: it is Christ Jesus, Messiah Saviour whom we worship."

Such was their faith and love. Some of their number began to "see" Jesus Christ in vision. They taught their ideas to the Jews but were rejected. The Christ-life they spoke of, as it made un-

necessary the washings and rules of unclean foods, which Jews enjoined, was rejected by the Jews. The freedom, among Christians, to heal on the Sabbath, neglect fasting, and eat what they desired, was abhorrent to the Pharisees, many of whom were of a narrow and strict type. The new religion was deemed heretical. It was a step above Judaism into the Kingdom of the Spirit.

(2) Now we come to Paul.

(a) Before his conversion Paul was a Hellenistic Jew of the diaspora (dispersion), not a Rabbinic Jew of Jerusalem and the Law. Mr. Claude G. Montefiore has shown this lately in "Judaism and St. Paul." Paul did not really love the Law or believe it helped him to live. But he felt for a better than a legal religion, though Mr. Montefiore may not think so. Paul wanted union with God. He had been brought up amid mystery-faiths, and felt the need of such, Jew though he was. He was not satisfied by keeping the Law. He wanted the Law-

giver and the Law within his heart. He seemed to see in the Christians what he wanted, and to Christ (the inward law of "die-to-live" personified and projected) Paul was "converted." He had, at first, persecuted the Church, holding fast as he did the "traditions" of the Jews. But in his heart he felt that this law of "die-to-live," this Love-principle of the Christians, was the secret of all things. He "saw" the Truth on the road to Damascus, and described it as "seeing the Lord." The "light" he saw was a psychological accompaniment of the spiritual experience he had, in a way such as has often happened to sensitive souls in moments of exaltation. Paul straightway refused to consult Peter, John, and James. He tells us over and over again, in Galatians, chaps. i. and ii., that he thought out his idea of Christianity for himself. As he was steeped in the Mystery-Religions he could only think out Christianity as a Mystery-Religion, and such indeed he made it. We read that he retired to

Arabia, then to Damascus (Gal. i.). It was fourteen years before he spent any time with the apostles, except for a few days. He preached Christianity as a Mystery-Religion. It seems very likely that the man who specially propounded the idea of the Christ having had an episode on earth to save men was Paul.

(b) Paul had been brought up amid the Mystery-Religions. Tarsus was the headquarters of Mithraism, which taught of a god Mithras, who was the mediator between Ormuzd and man, who fought the demons of evil, who had come to earth and had done the works of a Saviour, had partaken of a last supper, and ascended (without death) to heaven. Prof. Cumont (Belgium) tells us that it was also thought that Mithras would come again as judge.

In Tarsus, also, the religion of Attis was taught in temples. Attis was a Phrygian god, from the centre of Asia Minor. Originally a god of vegetation, who "died" in winter (like Tammuz or

Adonis—see Ezek. viii. 14) and “rose” in spring, he became moralised, so that his worshippers died to sin and rose to immortality by being initiated into his mysteries.

Other Mystery-Religions were those of Dionysus (a Greek god also called Bacchus, representing the Life-force felt in his worshippers in their dances), and Osiris (the Egyptian god who came to earth, was killed by Set, and who rose up and went to the Underworld, becoming the Judge of all men). The Gnostics also taught that there was a Logos World-Saviour who descended to help the world-soul (Sophia or Wisdom) and free her from her passions. This Logos was crucified, or the *pleroma* (fullness) of *æons* (eternal attributes of God) was bounded, limited by *stauros* (the cross).

Such Gnostic teaching is found recorded by Hippolytus (A.D. 220). It is given as existing in Valentinus and Basilides in the second century A.D., but it goes much further back, for Gnostic

terms are in Paul's Epistles—viz., Wisdom, Pleroma, Teleios (initiated), angels, Archon (ruler of a world), spiritual and carnal men, mystery, baptism. Hence we may presume that there was a pre-Christian Gnosticism, and Paul was a kind of Gnostic who spoke Wisdom among the initiated (1 Cor. ii. 6—8). Now the impact of these Mystery-Religions meant that Christ (who was Love personified, and believed to be existing in heaven) was looked on by Paul as a "lord" (1 Cor. viii. 6), and thought to have had an episode on earth, like the other mystery-gods, to have been born, to have died and descended to hell and risen again to heaven, and to be about to come as judge. Also the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper came from these Mystery-Religions, especially from that in Eleusis (near Athens, on the coast), where Persephone was worshipped as the Life that descended at winter to the lower regions (dragged down by Pluto, the god of Hades) and was released at spring and given back to her mother,

Demeter. This myth was moralised in times B.C., and the worshipper bathed in the sea and went through initiatory rites to symbolise dying to sin and rising to eternal life. There was a common meal in connection with this initiation, and so also in Mithraism. A recently discovered inscription tells of an invitation which one man sent to another to dine with him "at the table of the Lord Serapis" (= Osiris). Paul, in 1 Cor. x. 21, compares the table of Christ with the table of demons. By "demons" he, no doubt, means Mithras and Osiris, for it was the custom of the rather narrow-minded Jew to call all other gods than his own "demons."

The passage (1 Cor. ii. 23—25) on the Supper was probably not by Paul but a later insertion, for it breaks the context. The list also of those who "saw" the Lord in 1 Cor. xv. 3—8 is also probably a late gloss, for it is in the style of 1 Cor. ii. 23—25 ("I received that which I delivered"), and it gives a list of Christ-

ophanies not known to the writers of the four gospels apparently.

Thus the ceremony of the Lord's Supper came into Christianity from the Mystery-Religions, and its institution was later attributed to Christ, quite in the style of religions of that day. What the worshippers experienced was written as having been the work of the God they worshipped.

When Paul came to express his new religion of the Spirit he could only do so in terms of the Mystery-Religions, and so he told of the Saviour, the salvation and the sacraments. He told of Christ (the Love-Ideal) as of one who had "died." "We preach a Messiah crucified" (1 Cor. i. 23, ii. 2—8). This Messiah was divine, was in heaven once, descended to fight Satan (Col. ii. 15), must therefore have been born, in some appearance like a man, died on a cross (cf. the Gnostic idea of the Logos being crucified, which idea may well have been pre-Christian, for Gnostic terms are in Paul's epistles), and rose to heaven (Phil.

ii. 1—10; 2 Cor. viii. 9). Salvation was for men to “die” with Christ (so Christ’s death was really moral, not physical, or it could not be shared by men living on earth), and “rise again” now to the heavenly places (Ephes. ii. 1—6).

The sacraments in Paul are not mere symbols, but are efficacious (as he thought) to bring a soul into Christ, (i.e. into the Church) by baptism, and to give renewed participation in Christ by the supper.

So Paul (who was excitable and unscientific, and did not distinguish history from soteriology) began to set forth an episode in the life of the Eternal Logos or Christ. Paul (impelled by the stories of the mystery-gods) set up the story of Christ, and confirmed it by Old Testament passages wrongly interpreted to apply to the Messiah; for in reality they applied to Israel as a nation. We have seen (a) that Paul was brought up a Hellenistic Jew before his conversion, and (b) after his conversion he could

not but interpret Christianity as a Mystery-Religion.

(c) "But Paul tells us of Jesus having lived on earth," it is said.

Verily, but in what language? In Philippians ii. 1—10, Paul says that Christ was in eternity (Col. i. 15) in the "form of God." The word "form" includes a reference to substance (see Lightfoot's "Commentary on Philippians"). Christ (says Paul) gave up this equality with God and was found "in the likeness of men" (cp. Rom. viii. 3 also). The word "likeness" "does not imply the reality of our Lord's humanity" (Lightfoot). It means only appearance. Paul thought that there was once some Christophany on earth. Paul says Christ was born of a woman (Gal. iv. 4). But to say so of a real man would be unnecessary. There is something peculiar there. Paul also says that according to the flesh Christ was "of the seed of David"—for the *Scriptures* indicate this (Romans i. 1—3). This gives us the clue. Paul is really telling doctrine not history. The Scrip-

ture, Isaiah vii. 14 (quoted in Matt. i.), said the One to come would be born of a young woman ("Virgin"—in the Greek Septuagint translation). Isaiah xi. 1 said he would be of the seed of David. Paul is not telling history, but composing theology. Paul believed the Messiah-lord had been on earth, and died on a cross, and risen, for the Mystery-Religions said so of their gods. It was the way in which men thought of the Divine in those days, as having been through on earth what they were experiencing. And in Old Testament prophecy Paul found corroboration of the story of how this episode of the Christ must have taken place. Isaiah vii. 14, xi. 1, l. 6 (spat upon), liii. (the servant went as a lamb to the slaughter, and rose from dead)—such passages were taken as referring to the Messiah now, and used by Christians to *uphold* what the Mystery-Religions had suggested as true of the Christ.

The Jews had not been accustomed to think of Isaiah liii. as referring to the suffering of the Messiah. They looked

on the Suffering Servant as Israel, as it is stated, indeed, in Isaiah. But when the idea arose (in Paul especially) that the Christ had died and risen, this passage Isaiah liii. (and also Psalm xxii.) was seized on as upholding it. Probably a few Jews had believed Psalm xxii. and Isaiah liii. had some reference to the Messiah, as Edersheim indicates in his long list of over two hundred passages in the Old Testament which were believed by Jews to be "Messianic."

Paul, then, said vaguely that at one time the Eternal Christ (the Idea of the Universe—Col. i. 15) came to earth in the appearance (only) of a man, died and rose again, as the Scriptures upheld. Paul preached nothing he could not uphold by Scripture, *see* Acts xxvi. 23, 24 (the later chapters of Acts are more reliable than the earlier ones); Romans xvi. 26 (the 16th chapter is by Paul, though the rest is probably later). So, then, Paul hardly believed Jesus on earth was a real man; he was not sure how his descent and in-

carnation had happened. It was a disputed point. We read in Hippolytus (Bishop of Portus, A.D. 220) in his "Philosophumena," that the Gnostics of the second century thought that the body of Jesus was either psychic or spiritual. One school believed it was psychic, another (including the famous Bardesanes) said it was spiritual. They both denied it was physical. The Gnostics said the eternal Christ was born of Mary, but did not partake of her humanity. Thus, we can understand that Paul (who was a Gnostic really, and had doketic tendencies) did not really hold that Jesus Christ was a man fully. He had a vague idea of his having lived once on earth, but it was mystic *doctrine*, not history, though Paul did not carefully distinguish the two.

Thus the impact of the Mystery-Religions (including Gnosticism) on early Christianity led to the idea—in the soul of Paul (converted)—that this Christ of God (agent and ideal of God) had had an episode on earth at some time, had

died, descended to hades, and risen again to heaven.

Such, however, is not the history of a real man on earth, but the dramatising of the eternal Love of God, by which God ever lives by dying, by giving Himself to His children.

(*d*) Christ was to Paul an indwelling spirit. "The Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 17). Christ was before all things, and in Him all things hold together (Col. i. 15). He is the image of God. This phrase does not imply visibility, for Philo had so spoken of the "Logos" when he wrote in Alexandria (about A.D. 20—30), and Philo did not mean that anyone had seen the Logos. The Deistic idea of God among the Jews had become unsatisfying. Men wanted to feel God near, yea, within — and the Stoics so taught. The "Wisdom of Solomon" (a Hellenistic book in the Old Testament Apocrypha) says that "Wisdom was with God when He made the world." Wisdom is a personification of the Idea of the Universe. Christ is another

such personification. Religions in those days personified Nature forces or Moral ideals as gods and lords, and they told the truths about their gods in the form of stories or myths, which were often (as in the case of the Greek god Dionysus) enlarged into long narratives. So it was with Christ. He is the personification of the Love-Ideal ("die to live")—as the principle of the universe. "This divine Love-Ideal ends the Jewish law, and the estrangement between Jews and Gentiles," said Paul in effect (Rom. x. 4; xiii. 8). It was a heart-searching gospel. No wonder the Jews rejected it, in fear lest their ancient religion had come to an end—which indeed it had!

Paul saw in Isaiah liii. an assurance that in the Messiah's death the Messiah bore the curse of God against sin, so as to free believers from the Last Judgment. Such was a legal Rabbinical argument. But really to Paul Christ was the Die to Live principle, eternal in God (Col. i. 15; ii. 27), manifested in time (once, as Paul taught in outward speech, but

really in *all* hearts that "die" to live). Paul was "crucified with Christ." Paul ever "bore about the dying of the Lord Jesus." Paul called to men to "die to sin" *as* Christ did, be "buried with Christ" (symbolised in baptism), and "rise to Christ" now in a new life (Gal. ii. 20; 2 Cor. iv. 10; Rom. vi. 5—11; Col. ii. 12; Ephes. ii. 1—6). No literal crucifixion in history could be shared. So, then, Paul felt the Love-principle in his heart (Gal. i. 16), and called it "Christ," as did the early Christians, and steeped, as he was, in the Mystery-Religions, Paul attributed to Christ what he felt he (Paul) was going through, i.e. crucifixion (death to the lower manhood) and resurrection (to the spiritual divine life). Hence grew up the story of *Christ* having died and risen (and hence, born also, though not as an ordinary man). All this was in the way in which men expressed their religions in those days. When, e.g. the Greek worshippers of Dionysus desired to say they were persecuted by kings of Sparta, they said

Dionysus (the god) was persecuted by Lycurgus (the reputed lawgiver and king of Sparta) — see “Ency. Brit.” — article “Dionysus.”

Paul wrote of Christ, “He loved me, and gave himself up for me,” “One died on behalf of all,” “Christ died for our sins” (Gal. ii. 20; 2 Cor. v. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 3). Had these no meaning? If there was no man Jesus and no crucifixion, of what value is the idea of Christ having died? The Christ-story is of whatever goes on in God. There is a perpetual crucifixion of God. Dying to live is ever the law of the divine life. This is dramatised in the story of a man being crucified, and yet not of a man in the full ordinary sense of the word, for Paul imagined a theophany or christophany, in the *appearance* only of a man, having taken place. God ever gives His life for us, ever pours out His love into us, ever bears our sins and sorrows on His heart!

“The Lamb is slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. xiii. 8). Indeed,

the Book of Revelation, which calls Christ "Alpha and Omega," "King of kings and Lord of lords," the "Lamb" (from Isa. liii.), the "beginning of the creation of God" (iii. 14), gives again the Pauline view: cp. 1 Cor. viii. 6; Col. i. 15.

In Rev. xiii. 8, supposing the words "from the foundation of the world" be taken with "written," and not with "slain," we still get this idea that "names (of those to be saved) were written from the foundation of the world in the Book of Life of the Lamb that hath been slain."

So that the Book existed at the foundation of the world (cp. xvii. 8), and since it was the Book of the Lamb slain, Christ was the slain Lamb also from before creation.

(3) **We come to the Gospel of St. Mark,** in which the Christ-story is enlarged by (a) the process of using Old Testament prophecies as seeds from which to grow symbolic "incidents." At the same

time, (b) much of the discussion between the early Christians, and between Christians and Jews, is hinted at in this little tract called "The Gospel of St. Mark."

It is not easy, in regard to the first of these, for us to-day to grasp the mental attitude of the East towards historic facts.

An Oxford tutor told the present writer how, when in Palestine, he read the Book of Esther with a Syrian in Syriac. At the close the tutor said to the Syrian, "Now tell me the story in your own words." The Syrian began by relating the tale as it is in the Bible, then he launched forth to tell additional narratives. "But that is not in the Bible," said the tutor. "Oh, but that is *how it must have been*," said the guileless Syrian.

The Eastern (being unscientific) relates stories according to his imagination as if they were history, because he feels that is how "it must have been"; cp. the Books of Ruth, Jonah, and Daniel

—not history, but tendency-stories, to prove something or to comfort the oppressed.

In the Gospel of Mark the author (unknown) writes (*a*) a number of stories of Jesus, from Old Testament prophecies and Psalms, because he thought the Messiah "must have" so lived and died and risen again. At the same time (*b*) embedded in these stories are found bits of Church history of the early groups of Christ-men, their discussions with one another and with the Jews. If we run through the little tract this double origin will become apparent.

The story of John the Baptist is woven from Isaiah xl. 3, and Mal. iii. 1, while the description of Elijah in 2 Kings i. 8 ("a hairy man with a girdle of leather") is applied to John. John, then, was an ideal, not a historic, figure. He was put in the Christ-story, as the Elijah-like forerunner predicted of the Messiah.

The baptism of Jesus recalls Psalm ii. 7, while the temptation-story is built up on the lines of Zarathustra's tempta-

tion in the Zend-Avesta of the Persians. Jesus is regarded (as Mithras was) as one come to conquer Satan (1 John iii. 8 see). He begins by a battle against Satan, then he casts out an unclean spirit, for Zech. xiii. 2 had said "I will cause the unclean spirits to pass out of the land." (See 1 Cor. ii. 6—8; Col. ii. 15, as to how Christ was crucified by demons—archons—and stripped them off.) In Mark ii. we get probably a picture of the kind of discussions which went on between Christians and Jews, the former declaring they (i.e. Christ in them) could forgive sins, that they could neglect fasting, and could pluck corn on the Sabbath. In Mark iii. the picture of the Christ (who actually lived in the Church) is taken up again as he combats evil spirits. The Jews had said it was by Beelzebub that the early Church cast out "devils." This is written as if the "Christ" were so accused by the Jews.

The parable of the Sower (Mark iv.) is an old Gnostic parable (see Hippolytus' works), originally meaning that God sows

the Logos (Word or Reason) in human hearts.

The stilling of the storm (Matt. iv. 37) comes from Psalm cvii. 29, "He maketh the storm a calm," and is told in the way that the Book of Jonah records (a man asleep in a vessel, etc.). Christ stills the storms in human hearts.

The account of the man called "Legion" is another tale of how the Christ came to fight evils, personified as demons. Or it may be an exaggerated account of a healing work by the Christians. We know the early Church sent out men to preach and "cast out devils" (Mark vi. 7, 13).

The story of the feeding of the five thousand is an allegory, the meaning of which is given in John vi. 41, 48: "I am the bread of life." The story is moulded on that of Elisha feeding many with a few barley (cp. John vi. 9, "barley") loaves and fishes—see 2 Kings iv. 42—44. In both cases some food was said to be left over. The story of the feeding of the four thousand (Mark viii.) is a reduplication, and the conversation

which follows the story, in Mark viii. 14—21, shows how the author could compose conversations to suit the narrative he was telling (as if it were history).

The quarrel about Jewish rules for washings (Mark vii. 1—23) gives perhaps a piece of conversation such as may well have taken place between Christians and Jews. The Syrophœnician woman (Mark vii. 24—30) represents the Gentiles generally. To them also the new Love-life and its power were to go, though the "children" (Jews) had first to be fed. In Mark vii. 31—37 we have the story of a man who was deaf and had an impediment in his speech. This healing by the Christ is based on Isaiah xxxii. 4, "The tongue of the stammerer shall be ready to speak plainly" (cp. Mark vii. 35, "He spake plain"), and on Isaiah xxxv. 5, 6, "Your God will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind (spiritually blind) shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb shall sing."

Here was a "Messianic" passage which was taken as the basis of several stories in the Gospels (cp. Mark viii. 22—26; x. 46—52). No doubt they were meant to tell that the Christ or Love-Ideal heals spiritual blindness in the soul. A new section of Mark's Gospel begins at viii. 27, when Christ's passion may be said to commence. The idea of the Messiah suffering was a new one to most Jews. It came in from the Mystery-Religions taken as interpreting the Christian experience of "dying to live" as Love's law. It was supported by Psalm xxii. and Isaiah liii.; Dan. ix. 26; Zech. xii. 10; xiii. 7.

Such Old Testament passages are referred to in Mark viii. 31; ix. 12, 31; x. 33, wherein it is repeatedly said that the Son of Man *must* suffer, and suffer because of the Scriptures (ix. 12). Paul had said so too (1 Cor. xv. 3, 4).

The Transfiguration-story is an allegory composed to show that Christ is greater than both the Law and prophets, symbolised by Moses and Elias, "This is my beloved Son, hear *him*" (Mark ix. 7).

The story of the little child being received by Christ is variously told (Mark ix. 33—37, 42 ; x. 13—16). It does not refer to tiny children, but to “babes and sucklings” (Matt. xi. 25), who are contrasted with the “wise and prudent.” In the early Church some thought that the young and unlearned and uninstructed brother should not join the Church, but the better sense of the Church (“Christ” in the Church) welcomed such because they had humility.

The question of divorce was also debated in the early Church (Mark x. 1—12; verse 12 could not have been spoken by a man Jesus, a Jew, among Jews only, as they did not let women divorce their husbands). The stricter view of Rabbi Shammai was preferred to the laxer view of Rabbi Hillel in the Church in those days (but see 1 Cor. vii. 15).

The Rich Young Ruler (Mark x. 17—31) may represent Israel, since, as W. B. Smith has pointed out, the rare Greek

word for "his countenance fell" (Mark x. 22) occurs in Isaiah lvii. 17, where the reference is to Israel. If so, the mystic meaning is that the Jews refused to share their knowledge of God with the heathen, and so it was hard for them, as Jews, to be saved.

Mark xi. 1—10 tells of the entry into Jerusalem by the Christ, a story clearly written up from Zech. ix. 9, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion: shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy king cometh unto thee: he is just and having salvation: lowly and riding upon an ass, even upon a colt the foal of an ass." The reduplication (two animals) is poetic, and the reference is, of course, only to one; but Matthew, in his zeal to have the prophecy fully fulfilled, makes Jesus ride on two animals (Matt. xxi. 7)!

The story of Christ cursing the fig-tree is a symbolic allegory by the Church to indicate that the Jewish nation brought forth no (spiritual) fruit and was soon to be cut down (the destruction of

Jerusalem in A.D. 70 by Titus being referred to).

The question of tribute to Cæsar was one debated in the early Church (Mark xii. 13—17; and see Rom. xiii. 7, an earlier document than Mark).

The question of the resurrection (Mark xii. 18—27) was one debated also among Christians (cp. 1 Cor. xv.). There is only a phase of it here.

The two commands, Love God and love your neighbour, had been placed together in "The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs" (written B.C.), and so they are not original in their conjunction here (Mark xii. 29—31).

The question of the Christ as "Son of David" was another Messianic puzzle of those days (Mark xii. 35—37).

Mark xiii. gives a discourse on the time when the Messiah was expected from heaven, a matter which greatly agitated the early Church, as evidenced by the First and Second Epistles to the Thessalonians and the Book of Revelation. This chapter in Mark is not a

speech of a man Jesus. It implies (verse 14) the destruction of Jerusalem A.D. 70 (see the parallel in Luke xxi. 20).

In the story of the woman and the alabaster cruse of ointment, enlarged in Luke vii. 36—50, we have an allegorical story to indicate how greatly the Gentile sinners (see Luke vii. 39, "a sinner") welcomed the Christ-ideal, in contrast with the Jewish refusal so to do (Mark xiv. 4, "To what purpose this waste?").

Judas is a composite figure in the drama, set up from Psalm xli. 9; Zech. xi. 11, 12 ("thirty pieces of silver thrown into the treasury"); xiii. 6 ("wounded in the house of my friends").

The story of the Last Supper comes in from Paul (1 Cor. x. 16—21), who obtained the idea from the Mystery-Religions, while the death of Christ is put in the Passover season because he was called the "Lamb" (Rev. v. 6; xiv. 1; John i. 29; see Isaiah liii. 7; 1 Cor. v. 7, 8). No one was with Christ, or heard his words in the Garden of Gethsemane, so again we have not history here, but a

beautiful allegory of how love ever suffers in secret, and yet prays and is strengthened thereby. The framework of the picture is from Isaiah lxiii. 3, "I have trodden the wine-press (Gethsemane means an oil-press) alone, and of the peoples there was no man with me." Christ is represented as left alone in his prayer and later deserted by his disciples.

Again, in the trial of Jesus there are difficulties in regarding it as history, for the Jews did not take capital cases in one day only, nor before or on a Feast Day, nor did the Sanhedrim meet in the night (verse 68, "the cock crew" shows the trial was in the night).

Pilate (xv. 1—15) is a lay figure, and not the cruel procurator of whom Josephus tells us. A Pilate who washes his hands in public, and listens to his wife's dream (*see* Matthew), and tries to get Jesus off, is no historical figure. The scourging of Jesus (Mark xv. 15) recalls Isaiah l. 6. The spitting on Jesus is put in the story also because of Isaiah l. 6, where it is said

that the Suffering Servant "hid not his face from spitting."

Psalm lxi. 21 tells, in a "Messianic" Psalm, "They gave me *gall*, and in my *thirst* they gave me vinegar to drink" (see Mark xv. 23 and parallels).

That others (and criminals) should be crucified with Christ was suggested by Isaiah liii. 12, "He was numbered with the transgressors." The fact of crucifixion is given by Psalm xxii. 16, "They pierced my hands and feet."

"Eloi, Eloi" is taken from the same Psalm xxii. 1. The account of the rending of the veil of the temple (xv. 38) is a symbolical story to indicate that what separates Jews from Gentiles is done away in Christ (see Eph. ii. 13—38).

That a rich man should bury Jesus (Matt. xv. 43) is taken from Isaiah liii. 9, "They made his grave . . . with the rich."

The resurrection of the Messiah was suggested by the Mystery-Religions (as was the death), but was supported by Isaiah liii. 10; Psalm xvi. 10 (quoted in

Acts ii. 27); "Thou wilt not leave my soul in Hades."

Thus Mark is not a history of a man, but a dramatising of the Pauline Christ-story, in detail, and a setting of it in the days of Pilate and Caiaphas, who are lay figures here.

The history behind Mark is, that there was an early Church in Jerusalem that discussed questions of tribute to Cæsar, divorce, and the time when the Messiah was to appear.

But the rejection of the Christ-cult by the Jews (a historical fact, as Paul persecuted the Church) is told of as a crucifixion of Christ by the Jews, as was the customary method in religions of those days.

The real Power which heals men spiritually blind and which dies to rise again is "Christ," the Spiritual Life of Love in the soul, born in all who die to the rule of the lower self.

(4) **Matt. i. and ii.; Luke i. and ii.** must keep us for a little while, as they are

very instructive in helping us to understand how the religious stories of Christ were composed.

If we read 1 Sam. i., ii. and iii., and then read Luke i. and ii, we can hardly help noticing many likenesses. Samuel was the firstborn son, so was Jesus. Hannah sang a song (1 Sam. ii. 1—10), which is largely used for Mary to sing (Luke i. 46—55). Samuel was presented in the house of the Lord (at Shiloh), to aged Eli, where his parents went yearly to worship. Jesus was presented in the house of the Lord (at Jerusalem), to aged Simeon, where his parents went yearly to worship.

The words "this shall be a sign" occur in both stories. Young Samuel is "called" in the temple of the Lord. Jesus is found in the temple (when twelve years old). Before *and* after the incident we read, "the child grew before the Lord" (1 Sam. ii. 31; iii. 19). Similar words occur before *and* after the story of Jesus being found in the temple (Luke ii. 40, 52). It is clear that Luke i. and ii. is

not history but an artistic composition to glorify the Christ, based on the story of Samuel. Judges xiii. 5 was also used.

Then the story of the shepherds (Luke ii. 8—20) is based on the myth of Mithras (the Persian god), for Prof. Cumont (Ghent) says: "Shepherds witnessed the miracle of the entrance of Mithras into the world. . . . Worshipfully the shepherds drew near, offering the divine infant the first fruits of their flocks and their harvests" ("The Mysteries of Mithra," pp. 131, 132).

We may compare the story of the Magi (Persian wise men) in Matthew's account

Thus Luke's narrative is not history, but an ideal story to exalt Christ.

The genealogies in Matthew and Luke are irreconcilable compositions, and since they are of Joseph they are not of Jesus, who was not born of Joseph, according to both Matthew and Luke.

In Matthew, Mary is said to belong to Bethlehem and to go to Nazareth as a strange place (ii. 23). In Luke, Mary belongs to Nazareth and has to be

brought to Bethlehem by the device of the census. The date of this census is put too early, and in an unhistorical manner, for women were not required to travel thus to be enrolled.

The accounts of the angels in Luke i. and ii., and the quotations from prophecy worked up into stories in Matt. i. 20—23; ii. 5, 6, 15, 17, 18, indicate that these chapters (Matt. i. and ii.; Luke i. and ii.) do not tell of the Nativity of a man, but are romantic, even poetic (in places) accounts of how a god “must have been” born according to the pious thought of an unscientific age in the East. Luke i. and ii. may have been written to show that Jesus was truly a man, and written so as to combat the Gnostics. But if so we have further proof that Jesus was not a man, for if Jesus had been a real man, how could the Gnostics (some of them learned and able men) think that he had not a true humanity? And again, if the best “proof” of the humanity of Christ was a sacred romance, such as Luke i. and

ii. gives, it is clear that proof of his humanity was impossible.

With Luke i. and ii. we may compare the "Protevangelion of James." This is a book telling of the infancy of Mary (the mother of Jesus) and then of the birth of Jesus. It is in the style of Matt. i. and ii.; Luke i. and ii., and is found in the "Apocryphal New Testament" books (Hone). It is a book mentioned by Origen and Clement of Alexandria (about A.D. 250). Thus it was probably composed in the second century. It also seems to have been written against Gnostics, for Gnostics said that Jesus did not partake of the human nature of Mary in being born of her. This book seeks to show he did so partake. The stories here are purely romantic, and no one believes them to be history. They tell of Jesus being born in a cave (as Justin Martyr also said about A.D. 150), but this is another borrowing from the Mithras-myth, for he was said to be born in a cave.

Conversations are freely composed be-

tween Herod and the wise men from the East, and between Mary and Joseph, and we see how the conversations in our Four Gospels were imagined as what "must have been."

If the "Protevangelion" be rejected as romance, the first two chapters in both Matthew and Luke are romance, too, and indeed, the gospel of Mark is largely of the same character; but these books may have yet a spiritual value. They are works of art, true symbolically if not historically.

(5) **The Fourth Gospel** has been a great difficulty to modern critics. The stories in it used to be thought to be historically true; then they were said to be legend; now they can be seen to be allegory. They all have some spiritual significance.

The author (c. A.D. 120) is unknown, but he was probably a mystic living in Alexandria, for he largely used the language of Philo (B.C. 30—A.D. 20), such as Logos (word), Paraclete, Light and Darkness, the only-begotten Son of God, Water of Life.

The gospel contains symbolic stories, doctrinal speeches, and a messianic crucifixion :—

(a) Among the symbolic stories we read of the turning of water into wine. Philo had such language, and the story is an allegory to indicate how the water of Judaism was changed to the wine of Christianity. Nicodemus (chap. iii.) is a lay figure to bring out the need of the new birth from above.

The woman of Samaria represents the Samaritans. Her five husbands were the false deities the Samaritans had worshipped. The story teaches that the Christ was for these people as well as for the Jews.

The impotent man by the pool of Bethesda represents Israel who had been thirty-eight years in the wilderness (Deut. ii. 14), and the five porches represent the five Books of Moses. Christ could heal Israel.

The man blind from his birth represents the Gentiles, who ever had been spiritually blind. They, too, need the Christ.

The story of Lazarus is to show that Christ is "the Resurrection and the Life" (*see xi. 25*), and can give spiritual life to all.

The beautiful story of the washing of the disciples' feet is another allegory to tell that humble service is included in the Love-Ideal (which "Christ" is). The title over the cross was said to be written in Hebrew, Greek and Latin, to represent that the Christ is for all men. The blood and water are said to flow from the Christ because of the Gnostic "heresy" that Christ came not by water (baptism) (*see 1 John v. 6*).

The draught of 153 fishes (*xxi. 11*) is a reference probably to 2 Chron. ii. 17, where the number of Gentiles in the land of Israel is said to be 153,000 (and odd 600). The apostles believed they would be "fishers of men," and draw in the Gentiles. Indeed, the story of the disciples being fishermen at all was an allegorical idea, for they were thus said to be "fishers of men." It is not a historical fact that the early disciples

were simple fishermen (Matt. iv. 19 ; xiii. 47, 48).

(b) The doctrinal speeches in the Gospel of John are attributed to Jesus or his disciples, but are in the style of 1 John, and are really therefore by the author of 1 John. A Gnostic writing called "Pistis Sophia" gives long speeches to Jesus and shorter ones to his disciples, freely composed and quite unhistorical. It was the manner of writing in that age. These speeches are by the Eternal "Christ" living in the mind and heart of the writer so far as they give eternal truth. They are really philosophical, dualistic—harshly separating God and man, natural and spiritual birth, Christians and Jews (who were "children of the devil").

But gems of eternal truth are found in this gospel, e.g.: "Thou, Father, art in me and I in them." The idea of Christ being an eternal being (John i. 1—18 ; xvii. 24 ; viii. 58), really as God's character or Logos, gives the deep truth that God is not mere Power, but the

ultimate power is directed by Love. He is also in us ("I in them"). There is no distinction in the Fourth Gospel, any more than in Paul, between Christ and the Holy Spirit. They are one. "The Lord is the Spirit" (2 Cor. iii. 17). The Parousia of Christ is already present, according to the Fourth Gospel (xiv. 18). This Christ (or Love-Ideal of God) is indeed the Way to God, the deepest Life for and in men, the Bread of Life, the Comforter (Paraclete = sustainer, advocate) of souls. He is perpetually coming into the world by the natural course of events in history—for history is the gradual self-manifestation of the Eternal Life in the temporal conditions. The conditions hamper Love, and cause ignorance and evil in men, but Love will win in the long run, and already has accomplished much. So we can see that neither the stories nor the speeches in the Fourth Gospel give us a historical man Jesus. They were freely composed by a deep philosophical nature.

(c) The crucifixion is related according

to Old Testament prophecy, as in Mark and Matthew, but even more so, for it is insisted on in detail that all was fulfilled, as "it must have been"—see John xix. 23, 24, 32—37.

Caiaphas is a lay figure, and not the Caiaphas of history, for it is said he was high priest "for that year," an error, since the high priests were not appointed merely for a year.

The inner meaning of the gospel (as of Christianity) is given in John xii. 24, 25—Die to Live. This is the law of God, of the Universe, and Christ is really this Love-principle (self-realisation by self-sacrifice) personified and projected by his worshippers. The Christ-story is an effort to represent this deep truth of life by death. It is the law of God, and it should be recognised as the law of every soul. This "Christ" "came" in the early Church, i.e. was the Life-principle, evolved by human thought, till it came forth explicitly then—though the early Church did not fully see its application to the status of women and

slaves, whom they still kept in subordination (Ephes. v. 22—24; vi. 5—8). Though Paul told Philemon to receive Onesimus as a brother beloved, he did not tell him to free him.

But in the early Church there was a special revelation of God, or a crisis in that perpetual self-revelation. Other crises in history are associated with Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and with Luther, Calvin, Erasmus, groups of men in and by whom the divine emerges at last in a special manner.

The Conclusion to which we are driven to is (*a*) that there was no man Jesus. The word means "Saviour," and is taken from Joshua (Greek "Jesus," in the Septuagint version). Joshua (in the Book of Zechariah) was called the "Branch," the Messianic title: and we know a very early, probably pre-Christian, sect existed, called the Jessœi (*see* Hippolytus), whose object of worship was a god or lord "Jesus," so-called because of the Messiah being descended from Jesse (Isaiah xi. 1), or because of Joshua

(perhaps the hero of the Book of Joshua). Then we know of no town "Capernaum." It was a fountain (says Josephus), not a town. If Jesus (the World-principle incarnate, Col. i. 15) lived and taught there, there would surely have been a group of his disciples there, but the epistles never mention such at all. The groups were at Antioch and Jerusalem. The custom of writing stories and speeches, and inventing the characters, or using characters of the past as lay figures, was customary among the Jews: cp. the Books of Ruth, Jonah, Tobit, Esther, Daniel and Job, and Deuteronomy (written as if by Moses); also "Pistis Sophia" (a Gnostic work of the second century about Jesus teaching after his resurrection). There were many gods or divine beings imagined by men. These gods came to earth, died and ascended, as we have seen. It was the current method of cults to write up their myths—e.g. Dionysus and Osiris had long stories of their doings invented, yet they never lived. The gods were

personifications of real forces, and Christ was the Spiritual Law of die-to-live (called Love and Logos) personified and projected, as if a second divine being beside the Supreme Father. The Father being thought of deistically (afar) by the Jews, an intermediate Being was imagined as a person to exist. So, though "Christ" never lived as a man, he is an eternal aspect of God, viz. His heart, character, aim, Love-ideal by which God made the worlds, and to express which all things are naturally working together. Christ is the great reality, though not a "person" who lived as a man on earth.

In the story of William Tell we get a help to see how for long it can be believed that an ideal figure was once a man. The story was told about 1476 in nine stanzas. It related how Tell was a clever marksman, and shot dead a cruel Austrian bailiff. The story grew and came to include other feats (e.g. about the boy and the apple). About 1746 a pamphlet was issued showing

that Tell never lived. He was an ideal marksman, a character such as is told of in Denmark, Sweden, and Ireland also. The pamphlet was at first publicly burnt in anger, but we to-day see that it was true (*see* "Ency. Brit."—article "William Tell").

(b) The essence of Christianity is not, however, the existence of a man Jesus on earth, but the Life-principle (die to live) which is expressed in the story of his cross, and this will remain and save the world.

The principle of life is love. We live as we give. We find ourselves as we lose ourselves. Even the body exists by burning away day by day. The mind gets truth by dying to its prejudices. So the soul-life can only be by love, which means service, forgiveness of injuries, getting only the better to give, and "Christ" is defined as the Life-giving Spirit divine (1 Cor. xv. 45).

What the Christ-story sets forth is the way by which God lives and man

ought to live. God dies to live. God, said the Gnostics, is all love, and so needed objects of love, and that is why he descended into creation. Creation is a perpetual self-crucifixion of God. He leaves eternal bliss of isolation to enter a struggle in time. Because God has limited Himself, He cannot do all good at once. He must take time because He has entered time. Evolution is His method; but He is not outside looking on. The struggle is His. "Matter" is now known to be really energy, and since it affects mental life (in us) we may say it is spiritual energy become automatic. It is like an iceberg in the ocean of Life; from Life it comes, and it is Life-energy crystallised or become automatic, so as to be used by the all-pervading Life (or God) for the building up of organisms (plants, animals, men) and the training of the souls of men. God has translated Himself into a Universe of Life in time. Matter (all the stars) swims in this Life, and is used up by

the same for the creation of living organisms on earth. Life (God) has a purpose or aim or ideal of sacred Love, and now is working (in time) all things together to express this in souls. This Love, or Christ, is God's ultimate character, but in time much evil appears, not because God wants it, but because He is under limitations, and cannot all at once evolve souls of Love in time. They are still hampered by the "ape and tiger" nature. Hence come wars and cruelty, and mistakes and accidents, because God in man is limited at present.

Nevertheless, God has already done vast wonders in organising cells and bodies, and bringing up the human race to the science and sympathy it already possesses.

The aim of the Universe is thus a good one. God ever seeks to pour His all-encircling Life into souls as they can receive it.

The Gospel, by the Christ-story, tells us that.

And more, it tells us that God wants *our* lives to become fuller by the same law of the cross. Man is a microcosm, and must die to live.

(c) Only as the lower animal nature is controlled by the higher spiritual nature can the social problem be solved. Thus, e.g. the appetite for alcohol can be curbed (*see* Ephes. v. 18) so long as it is not a disease. So, also, the rule of sex-appetite (distinguishable from real affection and its gentler caresses) is to be controlled (not killed, as asceticism sought to do) by reason, prudence and a social ideal; so that the careless parentage (both out of and in marriage) shall come to an end, and no children arrive who are unwanted, or for whom no healthful provision is made. So also war can only end by the adoption of this life-principle. To merely say "war does not pay" will not end war, true though the saying be; for men will fight on the chance of gain, or because they are tools of merchants and financiers who will certainly gain by a war, or for "honour," or because of old

racial antagonisms (the Balkan War). To end war, men must die to a merely "patriotic" feeling, and rise to live as citizens of the human race.

So with the raising of wages to a minimum, and then the transformation of the wage-system into partnerships of workers and organisers in Industrial Guilds—such ends can only come by a deeper sympathy in all those concerned.

The emancipation of women can only be by women themselves dying to the ancient desire to be (practically) owned and used by men, and rising to their spiritual heritage as reasonable and loving human beings, seeking to this end their economic and personal freedom.

Thus only "Christ"—the divine law of life by death—can solve the social problems that harass the world to-day; for they are solved by souls being educated into their true life as spiritual children of a God, whoever loses himself and thus finds and realises himself.

Souls must be brought to feel intuitively (by direct feeling) the Urge in their hearts of the Infinite Ideal Life, forming them into social church-groups, that are independent of sex and race, and making for the World-Republic of a redeemed Humanity.

(d) And the meaning of death is lit up by the deep Christian truth that "Christ in you is the hope of glory" (Col. i. 27). In every life the principle of dying to live is illustrated, even in the life of plants and animals. Movement is in all these forms. But in man this principle can come to self-consciousness. Death of any organism means that "life unmakes itself" (Bergson's phrase). The body goes to dust (automatic lifeless energy). The organising principle "returns to God who gave it," i.e. remains in the all-penetrating super-personal Life (God). It is as though the inlet in the iceberg of matter closed up and the water retired into the surrounding ocean.

Such is the death of any organism—

be it protozoa, gnat, or dog or man. But in man the principle may become strong enough to give him an individuality in God. Then at death it is as though the water of the inlet not only retired into the ocean, but became a current therein. The Christ in man is his oneness with God. The Eternal Christ-Spirit says: "Thou, Father, art in me, and I in them" (John xvii. 23, 26). Souls that have reached the Christ-life ("accepted Christ," whether naming him thus or not) are, at death, as living currents in the ocean of God's Life, ready for some other "body" here or elsewhere, and beloved by God as His "children" for ever.